

Prayer Service for the Season of Creation

1 September (World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation) until 4 October (the Feast of St Francis of Assisi)

We invite you to use this resource to celebrate the Season of Creation (1st Sept until 4th Oct), with your students. Pope Francis calls us all to celebrate this moment to “reaffirm [our] personal vocation to be stewards of creation, to thank God for the wonderful handiwork which he has entrusted to our care, and to implore his help for the protection of creation, as well as his pardon for the sins committed against the world in which we live.”

NB: This outline may be freely adapted for your setting.

Preparation: Please prepare a prayer space for students to gather, in a circle or at the central point. Within the prayer space have either a number of small pots or one large pot filled with soil for students to plant seeds, enough seeds for those present and a watering can. We include the story of Tati from Indonesia. You might like to show a photo of Tati (see last page) or show the [video](#) of her story.

Opening Song

Suggestions: *Ancient Legacy* (Andrew Chinn, Rise Up) *Cosmic Hymn of Praise* (Michael Mangan, Setting Hearts on Fire) *Act Justly* (John Burland, God Loves Me)

(As a song is played, a student brings forward or places into the prayer space the seeds, which students will later plant.)

Opening Prayer

Leader: We begin in the name of the +Father, and of the +Son, and of the +Holy Spirit. Amen.

Loving God,
You created us to live with the birds of the air,
animals of the land and sea, trees, flowers,
plants and our brothers and sisters around the world.
Open our minds, touch our hearts and guide us
in ways of care and concern for all you have
gifted us.
We ask this in Your name.
Amen.

Call of Repentance

Leader: From the rising sun to the smallest of creatures, all of the earth is good. Yet, we see how our fragile world is being robbed. In many countries water is no longer safe to drink, forests are stripped bare and there is not enough food to eat. Let us listen to the story of Tati, a woman from Indonesia who is working to turn this around.
(Optional- display photo of Tati.)

Reader one: Tati lives in Indonesia with her husband and children. Her family has relied on the rainforest for generations. Over the last few years, some communities in Indonesia have seen the forests shrink. This caused problems for the people that depend on the forest for food, fish and medicine. It is also causing problems for the animals who have lost their habitats like the endangered orangutans, rhinos and tigers.

Reader two: A village elder from Tati's community says "People depend on the forest and the river for food, fish and medicine, as well as having a spiritual connection to it. Other villages which have sold their land no longer have a river with clean water or their own land. Without the forest their village is no longer cooler, they're noticing environmental changes." Tati's community is making sure this does not happen to them. They are working hard to protect the rainforest for the future.

Reader three: Caritas Australia, with its partners Caritas Indonesia—KARINA, and the Diocesan Caritas are working with local communities like Tati's to create new hope for a better future, by helping to teach local people English and long-term sustainable eco-tourism activities.



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Reader four: Through the program Tati has strengthened links to her culture and the land. She said, "I hope to continue living with fresh air, clean water, protected forest and to be able to pay for my children's educations so that my grandchildren can still enjoy the forest."

Reader five: In a letter called, *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis wrote to all people reminding us what has been lost because people have not cared for the earth and the people who live on it.

Leader: We have played a part in harming the earth and our neighbours, and we ask God's forgiveness. Let us share with one another some ways that we haven't looked after God's creation. *(Invite children to share)*

... For these we are truly sorry.

Gospel Reading

Leader: A Reading from the Gospel according to Matthew (13: 1-3; 31-33)

That same day, Jesus left the house and sat by the lakeside, but such large crowds gathered round him that he got into a boat and sat there. The people all stood on the shore, and he told them many things in parables.

He put another parable before them, 'The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed which a man took and sowed in his field. It is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the biggest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air can come and shelter in its branches.'

Leader: The Gospel of the Lord.

All: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Reflection

Leader: A mustard seed is small enough to hold in the palm of your hand and yet Jesus tells us that this precious little seed is like the kingdom of heaven. We ask God to open our eyes to the wonders of creation, and we offer our hearts in hope that all things may live and grow.

As a sign of this wonder, we will all now plant a seed and as a class over the coming weeks, we will water it, care for it and watch it grow.

(Students are invited to come forward and plant a seed in the soil)

Quiet music plays

Prayers of the Faithful

Leader: Let us now turn to God, asking for guidance as we care for the world and each other.

Reader: We pray for the world, our common home: that we may see God's beautiful creation as a special gift for us all to protect. Lord, hear us,

All: Lord hear our prayer.

Reader: We pray for world leaders, that they act with respect and urgency and work together to take care of our earth and our global family. Lord, hear us,

All: Lord hear our prayer.

Reader: We pray for communities already affected by the changing climate and for those at risk of natural disasters. May we do what we can to support communities to stay safe and have what they need. Lord, hear us,

All: Lord hear our prayer.

Reader: We pray for our school community. May we continue to listen to God's call to care for the earth and each other. Lord, hear us.

All: Lord hear our prayer.

Leader: *(Invite students to offer their own prayer)*.

We ask these prayers in Jesus' name.

All: Amen.



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Act of Commitment

Leader: We think of all who live in the rainforests of our earth. We think of the numerous varieties of birds who sing in the trees, and the fish who swim through the waters. We cherish the goodness which surrounds us and commit to protecting our common home, God's creation.

Now, as a sign of commitment, we water our seeds as a sign that we will care and protect them.

(Invite a student to come forward and water the seeds on the students' behalf.)

Final Prayer and Blessing

Leader: Lord, allow our eyes to see the beauty of creation, in flowers, creatures, forests, and cities. Allow our ears to listen to those in need. Allow our voices to speak out for justice when we see the earth and people mistreated. Allow our hands to care for the earth. Allow our feet to take your message out to the world. We ask this in Your name.

Amen

Leader: Through the blessing of the +Father, the +Son and the +Holy Spirit, may we go forth with joy to care for creation.

All: Amen.

Closing Song

Suggestions: *I am the River* (Andrew Chinn, Many Roads, One Journey) *Raise Your Voice for Justice* (John Burland, Move! Pray! Celebrate!) *Make a Little Difference* (Michael Mangan, Setting Hearts on Fire)

Acknowledgements: Adapted with permission from a resource by CAFOD (Caritas England and Wales).

Video of Tati's Story



Additional Teaching Resources



Catholic Social Teaching
Online Toolkit



